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Beatlemania returns with an old-new disc

Rock & Pop

by Juan Rodriguez

Rock 'n' Roll Music a new compilation of Beatles' discs recorded between 1962 and 1965, presents the "1ah tour" doing what they did best — raucous, sharp edged, harmonic rock 'n' roll.

By the time the pseudo- philosophies of Sgt. Pepper had descended upon us (and the "counter-culture" hope that accompanied it), the Beatles had virtually abandoned the sound and the frenzy of their heroes Chuck Berry and Little Richard, et al — but it was this sound which vaulted them into the phenomenon known as Beatlemania (and without Beatlemania there would not be a lot of things that are taken for granted today).

The new release, coming amidst the incessant rumors of a Beatles reunion, entered the Billboard Top 200 album charts this week at No.1. At a time when most rock hopefuls are bathing in the luxurious empty massage of the modern multi-track recording studio — and when they cannot get past mere simulation of original rock styles — this old-new Beatles record, much of which was recorded on "crude" equipment, offers fascination and an irresistable beat (nothing from Sgt. Pepper is included here).

The same thing happened a dozen years ago: the moptops took America by storm at a time when pop music was in its mindless wimphood (Leslie Gore, Neil Sedaka, et al). It took the four Liverpudlians — who bought U.S. rhythm 'n' blues records and then played their leather-rocking rides in seedy clubs in Hamburg — to turn on America who had supressed one of their great gifts to the world: Rock 'n' roll music.

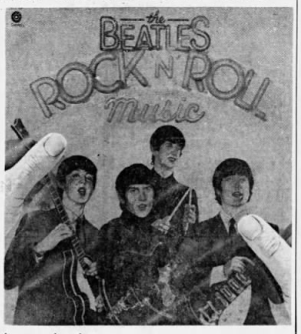
Thus, the album appropriately begins with their archetypal tight-ass rocker, Twist and Shout, the Isley Bros. soul song. All of side two is devoted to the great works by Berry, Carl Perkins, Larry Williams, Lieber & Stoller (a dozen of the 28 songs were written by the American originals — which should add a few deserved dollars to their bank accounts) and their reverently feverish renderings have never been equalled: the Beatles literally tossed themselves to rock 'n' roll.

This spirit carried over to their early originals, from the enticing *I Saw Her Standing There* ("She was just 17, ah you know what I mean ...") to *I Wanna Be Your Man* (which the Beatles wrote for the then-starving Rolling Stones in 1963) to such raunchy John Lennon shouts as *You Can't Do That, Any Time at All*, and *I Call Your Name*.

There is also a late-period rocker, *Revolution*, which defined the relationship between politics and the rock 'n' roll psyche, as well as other reminders that they drove on rock fuel: *Back in the U.S.S.R.*, *Helter Skelter* (the most clamorous of their songs) and *Get Back*.

There are a couple of conspicuous inclusions and omissions: *The Night Before*, from the Help album, is only routine, while *She's A Woman* (Paul McCartney's most fervent Little Richard vocal) and *Mr. Moonlight* (a great harmony heartwrencher) are inexplicably omitted.

In all aspects, the Beatles' performances here are more spontaneous and more skillful than in later years (witness the decline of George Harrison's guitar work as compared to these economical stinging solos) and that is why — Sgt. Pepper and professorial approval notwithstanding — The Beatles' Rock 'n' Roll Music continues to excite



Laurentian jazz

Uncle Charlie's willing to try all over again

By DAVID SHERMAN
for The Gazette

ST. SAUVEUR — Uncle Charlie is trying again. Playing here this weekend with Nelson Symonds, Jerry Labelle and Jim Hillman, the agelent Charlie Biddle is determined to bring jazz to the Laurentians with a string of Sunday concerts planned for the summer at Nymark's Nordic Lodge in the shadow of St. Sauveur's Hill 69.

Without financial backing, the man who has been synonymous with jazz in Montreal for more than a generation is trying to fill the void left by closing the four-year-old Uncle Charlie's Jazz Joint in Val Morin. He's promoting the concerts himself in a low-budget effort that has left four out of five of the hall's seats empty.

It's been 15 years since bass player Charlie Biddle and Halifax- born guitarist Nelson Symonds started Montreal's Black Bottom, one of the city's first exclusive jazz clubs. Yet the two masters seem destined to pay for their fealty to Montreal's music scene.

"It's sad, I know," explained Phyllis Pudgham, the impressario responsible for Cojo's jazz series. "Those two could play with anyone, anywhere, but because they've never wanted to leave Montreal, they haven't built up the international reputations we need to fill the halls for the Olympics."

Jerry (Gerard) Labelle, one of the few French Canadians on the jazz circuit who will appear in the Olympic series, remembers following Nelson Symonds and Charlie Biddle when he was learning to play.

"If you mention jazz in this city, then it's Nelson and Charlie. They've kept the scene going here because they love the city. They could have left many times, but they wanted to stay loyal to the people who supported them."

It's a loyalty that hasn't been returned, a loyalty that had Charlie selling cars for 10 years, then finally deciding to do away with promoters and booking agents entirely by renting clubs or opening his own.

"I'm single," explained Nelson, between sets, "so it's not so hard for me to survive. I don't need to become rich or famous. That's not where it's at. But Charlie has a family to support and it ain't been easy on him."

Charlie's family of five includes one aspiring musician whom Charlie is doing his best to dissuade because "I don't want him going through what I did to play good music."

"People from Manitoba, Nova Scotia or Quebec ain't supposed to be able to play," complained Nelson. "But a man comes up from New York and right away he's a star; even if he can't play."

When Charlie finishes making the rounds past the friends and well-wishers, his confident smile fades to reveal the strain of too many performances in too few nights for not nearly enough money.

"Sure I'm bitter. I'm bitter at the complete system." he says trying in vain to conceal half a lifetime of frustration. "Uncle Charlie is the jazz roots in this city, the only one willing to make the sacrifices to play good music. The public's ready, but the booking agents, and the club owners are blocking jazz. No one with money is willing to help. I have to do everything myself."

You know," he says, draining his glass of aleod, a potion that smells and tastes like rubbing alcohol "I brought in all the jazz for Expo 67. I think I've opened more jazz clubs then anyone in the world. I've brought this city some of the best jazz there is.

"But, I'll tell you," he says as he gets up to start the next set. "Uncle Charlie is going to stay until they accept what I'm trying to do. All they have to do is stop and listen."

So summer sees Charlie Biddle playing indefinitely at Le Portage, Hotel Bonaventure, driving around, pinning up his own publicity posters to promote *Uncle Charlie's Lauerstide Jazz Festival*, and selling ads to his own programs. To pay the bills, the self-confessed "one of the world's greatest chefs" will spend winter cooking for and managing Au Fanal, a bar and restaurant at the base of Mt. Habitant.

'Uncle' Charlie Biddle

UPI wirephoto
Natalia Makarova as Aurora in first night of Sleeping Beauty

American Ballet Theatre recreates Petipa's 'Beauty'

NEW YORK — (UPI) — The first American production of the ballet classic, *The Sleeping Beauty*, has much to recommend it to ballet fans who glory in full-evening, plotted productions of 19th century opulence and fairy tale simplicity.

Others, with more contemporary concern for dance innovation and thematic material that provides psychological insights, will find the American Ballet Theatre's new production a rather tedious evening of dance clothes, overwhelming glitter and empty-headedness. Fortunately the ABT has plenty of more modern works in its large repertory to keep dissenters happy.

The Sleeping Beauty must be taken for what it is. A serious recreation of Marius Petipa's original 1890 St. Petersburg choreography and the British Royal Ballet's memorable 1946 production, first seen in America in 1949. On these terms it is a successful showcase for the company's finest talents, which collectively form the best corps of international dancers performing in the Western hemisphere.

The opening night at the Metropolitan Opera House starred ABC's rightfully famous Russian tandem, Natalia Nakarova and Mihail Baryshnikov, in the roles of Princess Aurora and Prince Florimund. Succeeding performances featured different casts, teaming up Martine Van Hamel and Vladimir Gelvan, Gelsey Kirkland and Ivan Nagy, and Eleanor D'Antuono and Ted Kivitt. Virtually the whole company is being given a chance to feel "at home" in what is a major effort of the company's 36-year history.

Nakorova brought a teen-age radiance and feathery lightness to her role but did not fulfill its demands for regality.

Baryshnikov contributed mobility and some of his most spectacular dancing in the one solo allowed him in this ballerina-oriented work. Van Hamel made the Lilac Fairy a dominant personage through elegant footwork and benign presence, and Yoko Morishita and Fernando Bujones were outstanding stylish in the Blue Bird duet.

The choreography of Mary Skeaping, the former British ballerina-turned ballet producer and dance historian, is as authentic as one can hope for (Skeaping studied with Russians who had worked with Petipa and she first danced with Anna Pavlova's company). She has eliminated some of the miming associated with this ballet, letting dance movement tell the story wherever possible.

Oliver Messel has recreated his sets and costumes for the 1946 Royal (then Sadler's Wells) Balet and they are vey grand in the style of Fragonard and Hubert Robert architectural fantasies.

Tchaikovsky's richly melodic score was poorly served by musical directer Akiro Endo, whose clipshod conducting was slow, lacking in phrasing, and weighted toward the wind section. If the ABT's *The Sleeping Beauty*, which runs over 3½ hours, sometimes seems endless, Endo must take much of the blame.

U.S. Stratford falls short

NEW YORK — (UPI) — The American Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford, Conn. is a great concept with a beautiful playhouse deserving the finest productions and full public support.

Unfortunately, partly owing to its well-publicized financial problems, the perennial great expectations in its productions are seldom realized.

The two plays currently in repertory are Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. They will be joined later by *As You Like It* and *Love and Master Will*, a medley of love scenes from Shakespeare with Christopher Plummer and Zoe Caldwell.

The Crucible — about the 1692 witch trials in Salem, Mass. — first was produced in 1953 as an attack on McCarthyism. Today, stripped of its contemporary impact, the mass hysteria and the reaction to it are melodramatic and hard to swallow.

The production — both plays were directed by AST artistic director Michael Kahn — is heavy-handed, and the dialogue often unintelligible, with everyone treating Miller's lines as if they were as deathless as Shakespeare's. The outstanding performance is that of Maria Tucci as Elizabeth Proctor, intelligently conceived and beautifully done.

The Winter's Tale was seen briefly at the end of the 1975 season, but now has an almost entirely new cast. One successful holdover is Tucci in the double role of Hermione and her daughter Perdita. Again, she steals the show, capturing both the poetry of the play and the truth of the characters. As her madly jealous husband Leontes, Philip Kerr hits a single high note and plays the part as a cross between Richard III and a caged polar bear.

SPIN OFF

Eight double jazz albums

Lately, jazz has been attracting expert attention in the form of record company re-issues of historical performances a gleaning from a single artist's career.

One of these contributions to our jazz inheritance is a series of eight double albums released on the new and excellent label **Arista.** These first eight are each a round-up of several sessions originally issued on Savoy, one of the granddaddies of jazz labels.

Savoy first started recording in 1944 and the 78 rpm's had for a long time been sunk in the doubtful glory of being collector's items. Considering some of the very best jazz-men had recorded for Savoy, the unavailability of the label was a great shame.

But all's well now and the present double album collection should provide fun for just fans, solid learning ground for our young musicians, and top airplay material for the radio stations which are slowly waking up to the potential of the jazz market. In addition another re-issue series is being prepared for release.

With each album sub-titled **The Savoy Sessions,** the series offers the music of Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Erroll Garner, Milt Jackson, Yusef Lateef, Charlie "Bird" Parker, and Lester "Pres" Young.

In the cases of Cannon, Erroll, Bird and Pres, the albums feature several sessions with different groups of sidemen. Some of the Coltrane performances had never previously been released.

Since I just got my bot little hands on this treasure, I haven't yet heard all of it but the one album which intrigued me right off is **The Changing Face of Harlem** (Savoy).

It turned out to be a delightful excursion into the sounds of what was once the mecca of jazz. Thirty-two tunes played by 10 different groups with the added pleasure of top notch sound reproduction and very informative notes by jazz historian Dan Morgenstern.

The sessions were recorded between May and December 1941 and expose a number of giants in their early days. Not surprisingly, the music is nostalgically pleasing, fun to discover, and proves that musicians have been swingin' for a long time, indeed. Quite a few of these great fellows have passed on but their joy giving mastery is for keeps.

Here are a few names, just to hint at the fun in these grooves: Hot Lips Page, top class trumpeter and blues singer; Don Byas, Ben Webster and Herbie Fields, all super tenor saxists; Charlie "Bird" Parker, the one and only alumni; Slam Stewart and Oscar Pettiford, two legendary bassists; Tiny Grimes, a most underrated marvel of the guitar who is responsible for Charlie Parker's first recording date; Cozy Cole and Sid Catlett, master drummers.

— NIGHTHAWK

Mahogany Rush is back

Three erstwhile Hendrix-rockers from Montreal, Mahogany Rush, are back with their fourth album — and the first for the Columbia Records music machine. The title, **Mahogany Rush IV,** isn't creative like their others but the ads in the rock press are all-business. This is not likely to be the breakthrough album for the group, but it is consistent enough with the other material to maintain the cult following in the U.S. while their managers, David Krebs and Steve Leber (of Arrowsmith fame), go to work on the Big One.

The burning question is: Will Frank Marino, Paul Harwood and Jim Ayoub become bored with the Hendrix schtick before it pays off in riches for them?

All the signs are there on this album — standing pat with a heavyrock cosmic soul formula that they perfected on their previous record. The gimmickry which Marimo can handle with a Bo Diddleyesque tongue in cheek sounds a mite flat here and the band seems to be failing back on its image, instead of generating a new progression.

There is still time, of course — veteran Marino is all of 21.

— JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Two Ex-Byrds fly solo

If Los Angeles has a predominant music "sound" it is the country soft-rock style pioneered by the Byrds in the mid-60s.

Two ex-Byrds have new solo albums out.

The new Roger McGuinn album **Cardiff Rose** (Columbia) is, in a way, a legacy from the history-making Rolling Thunder Review. The excellent band, led by Mick Ronson, which backed Dylan as well as McGuinn on stage is featured on the new album produced by Ronson who, after a couple of disappointing solo efforts, again proves that when working with others (for example, Bowie) he brings out the best in himself as well as them.

Much of the McGuinn album is co-written with Jacques Levy, who also co-wrote much of Dylan's Desire.

Take Me Away is perhaps their most successful song and one of the best McGuinn has recorded in a while.

McGuinn's preoccupation with traditional material surfaces both in *Pretty Polly* and *Jolly Roger*.

Dylan and McGuinn have been friends for many years, and the Byrds have done some of the finest interpretations of Dylan's material. For this album Dylan has contributed a brand new song *Up to Me*, which McGuinn sings in his best Dylanesque style.

However, with the original Joni Mitchell contribution *Dreamland* he seems uncomfortable as if not quite sure how to cram all her lyrics into each line.

It seems incredible that, after all this time, ex-Byrd Chris Hillman's solo album **Slipping Away** (Asylum) is his first.

Since leaving the Byrds he has been a founder member of such groups as The Flying Burrito Bros., Steve Stills' Manassas, and The Souther, Hillman, Furay Band.

We now get a chance for two sides of undiluted Hillman. More country and gentler than the electric Roger McGuinn, it has all the tastefulness we have come to expect from him.

However, too much tastefulness can lead to blandness, which is one of the failings of this album.

The material is consistently good throughout, with Hillman writing all but two of the songs.

Hillman's pure vocals and harmonies are a delight throughout.

Step on Out is one of the outstanding cuts, with an energy and a sense of urgency about it that is lacking on some of the other songs.

Down in the Churchyard has a country-reggae feel to it, while *Midnight Agent* reminds me how influential Hillman has been with bands like the Eagles.

The fiddlin and pickin' *Lifeboat* gives us a taste of traditional country, while the title cut *Slippin' Away* introduces a jazzy touch to the country.

— DOUG PRINGLE

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